



Dreams Collapse



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Chapter 1 by Exalted Toast

Humans are dark creatures.

My name? I simply call myself Lan; It has a nice single-syllable ring to it. I never use my real name. In fact, I use it so little that I hardly even remember it. The name I put on official documents would be something I come up with on the spot. The most recent I remember using would be Dixàj Lyiib. I guess my identity is a mystery to even myself.

And here I am, waiting patiently in the back of my jeep. I have no home, but my jeep serves as plenty space to live. It also moves, so that's a plus. I just wait, wrapped in my blanket and with my one pillow that's propped against the seat. I always slept with the roof's window open, so I could see the stars. I liked to think that each galaxy has exactly one planet like ours, with its own beings walking upon their earth.

Chapter 2 by Starflight the Nightwing



Then again, humans are dark creatures.

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"You came."

"Did you ever doubt I would?"

Chapter 3 by Midna



Perhaps not all humans are evil. Perhaps there is still love and light in the world. Perhaps...

I quickly clambered out of the jeep and greeted Ila.

"Come on. Time to go," she said.

"And where exactly are we going?" I asked. She had told me we needed to go somewhere important last time we met up but hadn't specified where.

"I can't tell you until I know you are in. I want you to know the journey will be dangerous. You will need to fully trust me."

"I trust you," I said,

After all, she's my sister.

Chapter 4 by Glenn Dungan



We sat in my jeep that Ila nicknamed "Pat".

It was short for Patriot, which itself was a reference about some policy enacted centuries ago about surveillance in a nation snuggled in the beginning history texts where the first, uncivilized societies are taught and far removed from any student's interest. The year was 4008. The United States of America ended a thousand years ago, and the Patriot Act was roughly the same amount of years before that. But course, Ila appreciates the irony of obscure history. We are off the grid, and Pat keeps us moving. My sister always found the poetry in her cleverness that I envy.

I was rubbing the sleep sand out of my eyes as I shuffled into my pocket and handed Ila the keys. Most cars don't work on keys anymore, but our Pat was low-tech. We don't need biosignatures for our jeep, which is actually convenient because all exiled lose their index finger as punishment to cement their permanent ejection from The Guild. Pat fits into our travels like a glove. I came up with that one myself.

Ila handed me a thermos of coffee in the sitting position. She waited into we were on the wayward and...
"Are you in?"
"What?"

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"Are you in, like, with me?"

"Of course, Ila."

She reached into the satchel on her lap and pulled out a silver orb and handed it to me.

"It's cold," I puzzled.

"Do you realize what this is?"

"No. It looks like a jammer." I thumbed the outside shell, tracing the black lines that wrap out it like a net.

"I think it's a battery."

"A battery? Everything is solar powered now. We don't need batteries."

Ila sighed. "No dummy, it's a battery for one of those Seer Drones."

I almost dropped the orb.

"Be careful. It's dormant. These things sell for, I don't know, gazillions."

"We don't know anyone to sell it to. We don't even have any money to sell it to one another."

"No, but I know of people that do. The Scions."

"Those garden pacifists across the country? They don't let anyone in." I almost wanted to slap Ila across the head.

"It's better than sleeping in a jeep, Lan. Or should I say, Dixàj Lyiib."

"Shut up," I said, leaning back. I retrieved my pillow, "What we have is very illegal."

"Let's hope Pat is fast."

I smiled at my sister, although she did not see it underneath the darkness of the night. "Onward to San Francisco, then."

Ila chuckled. "So dramatic."

Chapter 5 by Starflight the Nightwing



Pat raced through the rough city streets, jostling both the orb and its holders, and giving the latter a heart attack every minute. After hours and hours of anxiously watching the globe and making sure we weren't being followed by someone looking for the orb, we were at the San Francisco gates. The fence was huge, easily forty feet tall, topped with barbed wire and, according to the sign attached to it, electrically charged. I swallowed hard. We pulled up to the

gate. A guard stopped us and my heart rate spiked.

"State your business and provide your ID."

I pulled out my I.D. and prayed to whatever god above that he would take it. I put old Pat in

reverse, ready to bail at the

"State your business, please."

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I nearly sighed with relief but decided better of it. I thanked whatever god I had called upon, looked straight at the guard, and used the most even, level, and calm voice I had ever heard. Kind of.

"MerCHants."

Ila and the guard burst out laughing at my voice crack as I blushed in embarrassment. I could feel my cheeks turning red and shied back into my seat. The guard, after commenting on how that was the best laugh he'd had in a long time, waved us in, past the gate. When we were finally out of earshot, my face returned to normal and I finally sighed in relief.

"We're in."

Chapter 6 by Starflight the Nightwing



"Yeah, I noticed."

"Well, I didn't think you noticed, given how HARD you were laughing back there."

"Oh, come on. Even you have to admit, that was hilarious."

"Was not!"

I slap her arm, in the friendly but aggressive way only siblings can master. Or maybe harder.

"Ow!"

"That didn't hurt, you wuss."

I continue driving along the road pretending to know where I'm going. I see a guard and not-so-casually guide Pat into a street without any.

"You missed a turn."

"Yeah, probably."

"No probably about it, you're supposed to go that way."

She pointed to the north, where a huge skyscraper sat high above every house.

"The huge skyscraper that looks ready to impale me?"

"Its a building. It can't impale you. And, yes, that's the one."

I bite back a comeback that's sitting on the tip of my tongue and drive towards the massive tower, getting lost many, many, many times. After about three hours (when it should have taken about one), we arrive. I pull up in front of the building. I put the orb in my backpack and hop out

of the car. Two men in black suits walk up, reminding me of those stupid old movies where all the creepy henchmen dressed in black.

"This the one?" The gruff voice comes from the taller of the two. The man who now has a very large, very intimidating gun.

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"Yeah. He's an idiot. How would I get a so-called 'electrical orb'? If there even was such a thing, that is. I'm a terrible thief."

My sister's voice echoes comfortably with those of the men who have, apparently, been looking for me. It takes me a second to process, but when I do, I don't explode like I normally would. That would get me killed. I just hope that there's a little of the girl I knew in her, and hit that girl where it would hurt.

"Traitor."

The words come out of my mouth like acid, and from the split second of disappointment that comes to her face, I know it hurts. I press further.

"I'll never forgive you."

"Take him away," she orders, with a very noticeable hitch in her voice.

I smile in satisfaction. Then I remember where I am.

Chapter 7 by Starflight the Nightwing



The men drag me towards the large, human-impaling skyscraper, but to my surprise, they avoid the front door. My body is pulled towards the back of the building and a sack is soon shoved over my head. It's pretty stuffy and gross, but no matter how much I complain (more to annoy the guards than to complain) they won't take it off. I hear the soft grinding of metal and against metal and soon feel a cool ramp underneath my feet.

"A hidden entrance?" I guess. Stars shoot across my vision, and everything goes black.

Who-knows-how-long later, I wake in a dark room. I'm strapped to a dentist-style chair and when I realize it, I'm tempted to roll my eyes. "What is this? A James Bond movie?"

A snicker emerges from a corner I can't see, and a loud thud, presumably from someone getting elbowed. Finally, extremely bright floodlights turn on. The sudden addition of light in the previously dark room makes my vision swim. Now that I can see, my eyes reveal about a dozen scientists all standing around me, examining me, but for what, I haven't the faintest clue.

"What's this all about?"

"You don't know?"

The female voice, oddly enough, does not come from the scientists, but from a loudspeaker just

out of my line of sight.

"Clearly not."

"Well, then, I think we owe you an explanation."

The loudspeaker laughs.

"Before you die."

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